

IN COLD BLOOD

TRUMAN CAPOTE

LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

RONALD GOODRICH, Chief Editor

TEACHER'S GUIDE

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Although he was born in New Orleans on September 30, 1914, Truman Capote objects to being called a Southern writer. This dramatist, novelist and short story writer attended six different schools but dropped out when he was seventeen to pursue his interest in writing. Capote was twice awarded the O. Henry Memorial Award for his short stories. He received the National Institute of Arts and Letters Creative Writing Award in 1959 and an Emmy in 1967 for his television adaptation of his short story, "A Christmas Memory." He enjoys traveling while maintaining an apartment in New York City, a house in Palm Springs, California, and a villa in Switzerland.

CRITIC'S CORNER

Truman Capote began *In Cold Blood* in November, 1959, when he spotted a few paragraphs in the *New York Times* reporting the slaying of Herbert W. Clutter and his family. Capote had previously decided to write a non-fiction novel with crime as the subject, and now this item seemed to be just right for further investigation. For five years, Capote interviewed everyone connected with the case. Acclaimed as a classic upon publication, *In Cold Blood* "has the special merit of requiring, and repaying, thoughtful attention." Capote received the Edgar Award in 1966 from the Mystery Writers of America for *In Cold Blood*. The *New York Review of Books* called *In Cold Blood* "the best documentary account of an American crime ever written."

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences or thought units that have particular meaning in the story. Explain the meaning each has in this book. Page numbers are given so that you can note the context from which the item is taken.

1. score (p. 25 and others)

[The word as used by Dick comes close to the colloquial meaning of the word, "a successful move or stroke." In today's criminal vernacular, it indicates any planned crime, sometimes of small caliber. "To score" is to carry out such a planned crime. That Dick's score happens to be one of the century's most heinous crimes makes his casual use of the word all the more blood-curdling.]

2. honey (p. 34 and others)

[A term of endearment, like "darling." The reader is likely to feel that this particular form of address is one rarely used between strongly masculine men, particularly the criminal type. The muted homosexual theme is constantly hinted at in Dick and Perry's quibbling, jealous, dependent relationship. However, no overt homosexuality is ever recorded. In fact, Dick is presented as aggressively heterosexual, much liked by women with whom he has great success. He has been married and fathered children. He plans to rape Nancy Clutter at the same time he plans his "score," partly because he knows she is quite young and he likes young girls. He is deterred from carrying out his part of the plan by Perry, who threatens to kill him first. Perry calls Dick "totally virile," but he seems to mean simply that he is practical and pragmatic. Perry's self-cultivated vocabulary is often a bit over-blown or obscure. Throughout the book, Perry's sex interest seems to be practically nil. His relationship in prison with Willie-Jay was one of profound affection but apparently never consummated.]

3. tall yellow bird (p. 141 and others)

[Perry has always daydreamed of vague paradises where a great winged creature does injury to others in return for injuries done him. This is often a tall yellow bird with a parrot-like face. It figures significantly in his memory of the revenge taken by this bird on the nuns in the orphanage who beat him for wetting his bed. As the years have gone by, the bird has delivered him from other particular torments — older children, his father, a faithless girl, an army sergeant he had known. One night during his incarceration in the Finney County jail, he dreams that he unscrews the always-burning light bulb, breaks it and with the broken bits cuts his wrists and ankles. All breath and light leaving him, "the walls of the cell fall away, the sky comes down," and he "sees the big yellow bird. She lifts him . . . they go up, up . . . he is free, he is flying, he is better than any of them." The appearance of such symbolic creatures is quite common to Perry.]

4. In Cold Blood (title)

[The phrase is defined as - carefully premeditated, intricately planned, mercilessly executed. It argues logic, reason, planning, cause-effect thinking, personal responsibility. On some scores, the story well supports the title. That the crime was carefully premeditated is cer-

IN COLD BLOOD

tain. Dick delights in describing "hair splattered all over the wall" after the killings. He says murder is easier than cashing checks. Perry goes along with this thought and helps make the plans and carry them out mercilessly. But both killers do have some last minute doubts. Perry is reluctant to go on when he sees lights in the neighboring Stocklein home. Dick has a short but strong sense of fear and doubt and almost hopes the Clutters are not at home. This feeling is replaced by one of thrill, of watching himself carry through the plans like a character in a movie. Dick is merely ambitious; he can plan a murder, but not commit one. We are told that for all his almost gentle behavior toward the victims (making them comfortable) Perry finally has a sort of "brain explosion" which causes him to shotgun them to death. When it is all over and they are caught, both killers laugh and say it was fun. It is a sad commentary that our world is so filled with taken-for-granted violence and brutality that writers often interpret what the killers tell them in such a way as to turn these killers into literate, psychological heroes. Perry, in his interviews with Capote hints that the title may have a different significance—that the capital punishment of the crimes is in itself "in cold blood." Indeed, the book does close on the ironical note that the hapless murderers themselves are killed by judicial decree.]

5. nonfiction novel (Capote's own description of the book)

[Perhaps nothing about this book caused more of a flurry in the literary world than Capote's labeling it a "non-fiction novel." If one accepts the definition that a novel is a fictional prose narrative of substantial length, than the label would seem to be a contradiction in terms, like "hard top convertible or fresh-frozen food." Prior to the publication of *In Cold Blood*, several other fictionalized works based on fact had appeared—documentaries edited from tape, classical journalistic pieces like John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, fictional novels suggested by fact like Meyer Levin's *Compulsion* and others. Capote feels very strongly that in this type of writing the author should not appear. (Of course, the author can actually make his own comment by what he chooses to tell or not to tell of what he has heard.) Capote has written *In Cold Blood* based exclusively on personal interviews, none of which were tape recorded (he says these tend to make the subject self-conscious). All dialogue of the victims is reconstructed from interviews with people who talked with them. After making notes of the interviews, Capote says he rarely referred to these notes before writing the book. Perhaps he should have done so. Representatives of the various media have accused Capote of errors and inaccuracies in his reportage: e. g. Nancy's old horse Babe was actually sold to Seth Earnest, the postmaster, for \$182.50, not the more

dramatic Menonite farmer for \$75; Mrs. Meier says she actually saw very little of Perry while he was in the county jail; Bobby Rupp says he was not "always back and forth" to the Clutter home; Perry did not apologize just before the execution. One critic feels "this isn't writing; it's research." Capote the novelist could not keep out of the book entirely, however. Note the quite obvious "curtain" at the ends of the chapters. Whatever he may call it, perhaps it is to Capote's credit that, true as it is, the reader cannot help believing it is a novel.]

6. lonely and inappropriate as a seagull in a wheat field (p. 306)

[The picture of an aquatic bird that ordinarily flies far out over the ocean straying a thousand miles inland to appear in a sunbaked Midwestern wheat field is so unusual and so vivid as to give us a poignant and unforgettable picture of Perry on the opening day of the trial. Amongst the stiffly new suits of all four lawyers, the creaking new shoes of the big-footed county attorney, the trim blue serge suit and white shirt and narrow tie of Dick, there sits Perry in an ill-fitting, open-necked shirt borrowed from the sheriff, blue jeans rolled up at the cuff to accommodate his abnormally short legs—"as lonely and inappropriate as a seagull in a wheat field."]

7. Last to See Them Alive (title of Part I of the book)

[The title of this section of the book provokes a "double take" somewhat like the title of the book itself. It refers at first glance to the various people of Holcomb who saw and talked to the Clutters on their last day. Capote wisely gives us no details of the murders in this section but follows Bobby Rupp's departure from the Clutter house on that last Saturday night with the discovery of the bodies the next morning. But the author's last reference in this section is to the killers themselves (both asleep) who were really "the last to see them alive."]

8. "Well, what's there to say about capital punishment? I'm not against it. Revenge is all it is, but what's wrong with revenge?" (p. 375)

[This comment sums up the condemned Hickock's attitude toward capital punishment. Unlike Perry Smith, Hickock does not question the state's moral right to take his life. He understands the general impatience over the long delay of his execution. Readers may note that Hickock says nothing about capital punishment as a deterrent to crime, the usual justification put forth by law enforcement officers. In Hickock's opinion, execution is society's revenge against him rather than the means of achieving justice. Society is applying the old law of a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye. Hickock's comment also reflects Capote's attitude that capital punishment is simply legal murder "in cold blood." Readers may agree or disagree with Hickock's assessment of the true motive of those people who favor capital punishment.]

9. Freres humains qui après nous vivez,
N'ayez les cuers contre nous endurcis,

IN COLD BLOOD

Car, se pitie de nous povrez avez
Dieu en aura plus tost de vous mercis.

(page preceding title page of Part I)

[The lines above are the first four lines of "epitaph in the Form of a Ballad" written by the French poet and thief Francois Villon (1431-1464?) while he and some of his company were awaiting execution by hanging. Translated it reads:

"Brothers and men that shall after us be,
Let not your hearts be hard to us:
For pitying this our misery
Ye shall find God the more piteous."

} The teacher
may wish to
provide students
with this
translation.

There can be little doubt as to the reason for its inclusion in the book. Capote is asking the reader to look with compassion on the two men of his story, to forgive them their trespasses so that God may forgive us our own trespasses.]

10. It wasn't because of anything the Clutters did. They never hurt me. Like other people. Like people have all my life. Maybe it's just that the Clutters were the ones who had to pay for it." (p. 326)

[Perry's "real and only friend" Willie-Jay, a chaplain's assistant, in a farewell letter when Perry wins parole from Kansas State Penitentiary four months before the murders, writes: "You are a man of extreme passion, a hungry man striving to project his individuality against a backdrop of rigid conformity. You exist . . . suspended between two superstructures—one self expression and the other self destruction. You are strong but there is a flaw in your strength, and unless you learn to control it the flaw will prove stronger than your strength and defeat you. The flaw? Explosive emotional reaction out of all proportion to the occasion." In some ways, then, the Clutter killings are no more murder than suicide. A child with demonstrated keen intelligence, musical talent, and artistic ability faces the terrors of poverty and prejudice. From the beginning, his life is a constant accumulation of disillusionments and reverses. He suddenly finds himself in the Clutter house that night in a psychological cul-de-sac. The Clutters are perfect symbols for every frustration in his life. It is Perry's words above that return to haunt the reader's imagination.]

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following items in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1 - 5 Literal Level

1. Even if you did not know in advance this was a story of a murder, point out five places where Capote hints at it early in the story.

[For all his insistence that the author must and does stay outside a story like this, Capote the novelist cannot resist some "little did they think" writing early in the story.

- p. 24 - Mr. Clutter allows the Oklahoma hunters to shoot over his land, "touching the brim of his cap, headed for home and the day's work, unaware that it would be his last."
- p. 25 - Perry wasn't for long (back in Kansas) - part of his parole.
- p. 34 - Dick promises Perry "we'll blast (or splatter) hair all over them walls".
- p. 41 - "Now, on this final day of her life" Mrs. Clutter undresses.
- p. 49 - Dick reminds Perry "for the millionth time" that anyone they encounter will not live to bear witness—"No witnesses".
- p. 54 - Mr. Helm is quoted as saying of Nancy and Kenyon "last I seen them".
- p. 59 - Dick is unable to secure any black stocking from the nuns in the hospital to be used as face masks.
- p. 61 - Mr. Clutter makes the first payment on a \$40,000 insurance policy that in the event of death by accidental means pays double indemnity.
- p. 67 - Bobby Rupp remembers that somebody must have been hiding outside the Clutter house . . . "just waiting for me to leave".
- p. 68 - The filling station attendant in Great Bend didn't think "for the longest while, to connect the visitors with the tragedy in Holcomb".
- p. 71 - Nancy sets out her clothes to wear to church the next day . . . "It was the dress in which she was to be buried".]
2. What is Perry's and Dick's motive for murdering the Clutter family?
[While in prison, Dick learns that Mr. Clutter keeps large sums of money in a safe in his home. The plan is simple; Perry and Dick will enter the Clutter home, rob them and then kill everyone so that there will be no witnesses. (p. 186) The plot to rob and murder the Clutter family has been unfolded gradually, but the full details of the planning and the crime are not revealed until Perry's confession. (pp. 262-268) Ironically, there is no large sum of money in the Clutter home. The murderers escape with no more than forty or fifty dollars. (p. 278) Thus the murders lack real motivation. Hardly realizing what he is doing, Perry cuts Mr. Clutter's throat. (pp. 275-276) Then, after finishing off Mr. Clutter with a shotgun, Perry and Dick kill the other three members of the family.]

3. Why does Perry finally admit that he actually committed all four murders?

[Dick doesn't want to die with his mother thinking he actually killed any members of the Clutter family (although it was his plan and he is equally guilty, under

IN COLD BLOOD

the law). When Perry hears this, he says the Hickocks are "good people" so "why not have it that way." For this gesture, Perry earns Mrs. Hickock's pity and prayers.]

4. Is Perry truthful when he tells Dick he has killed a black man previously?

[Perry lies to impress Dick. When the killers first meet in prison at Lansing, Dick thinks Perry "a good guy" but hardly worth cultivating until, one day, Perry "describes a murder, telling how, simply 'for the hell of it' he had killed a colored man in Las Vegas—beaten him to death with a bicycle chain." (p. 69) On further acquaintance, Dick is convinced Perry is "a natural killer . . . absolutely sane but conscienceless . . . capable of dealing, with or without motive, the coldest blooded deathblows." This is just what Dick needs to further his ambition. After the Clutter killings, Perry admits that deep down he never thought he could do a thing like that. "What about the nigger?" Dick's whole assessment of Perry's character and potentialities is founded on this story of the murder of the black man. "Oh, sure I did it. Only—a nigger. It's not the same." Dick is right to distrust the story—it isn't true.]

5. How do the family backgrounds of Dick and Perry differ?

[Although Dick's family never suffers the deprivation of real poverty, they live near the subsistence level at all times. The Hickocks are plain Kansas country people, the kind that say a "blessing" before each meal. Dick's first ten years are so nearly normal that he finds it difficult later to remember much about them. Although his father is a stern disciplinarian with him and his brother, Dick cannot remember his parents even quarreling more than a time or two. Dick has lots of toys for "semi-poor" people like the Hickocks. He always has plenty of neat, clean clothes. Up until he sustains head injuries in a car accident, his family maintains he is a "happy-go-lucky" boy—no trouble to anyone, although the neighbors disagree. The sick father and the mother, who wonders what she did wrong, stand by Dick to the end.

Poverty, alcoholism, prostitution, violence, brutality and neglect in his childhood make up Perry's background. He is one of four children of a lean Cherokee girl named Flo Buckskin and a "homely handsome Irish cowboy" named Tex John Smith. As a baby, Perry is taken to Alaska with his family. Here his father makes "bootleg hootch" with which his mother becomes all too well acquainted, and quarrels between the parents are violent, partly over the mother's "entertaining" other men. The children are witnesses to both the affairs and the fights. The mother runs away from the father, taking the children to San Francisco. The mother, always

drunk, allows the children to run wild, and Perry is soon in trouble and in a series of detention homes and orphanages, where he is often humiliatingly and brutally treated. He later spends some time roaming about with his father and serves hitches in the Merchant Marine and the army during the Korean conflict. After a final break with his father, he is sent to Kansas State Penitentiary for larceny, jail break and car theft. It is here that he meets Dick. Meantime, the rest of the Smith family has been doing badly, also. His mother dies of alcoholism, a sister jumps from a hotel window, his brother's jealousy drives his young wife to suicide and the next day the brother kills himself. Only Perry's sister Barbara leads a reasonably normal life, and Perry hates her—just "wishes she'd been there" at the Clutter house that Saturday night so he could have killed her, too. Barbara writes to Perry but wishes to remain anonymous and does not attend his trial.]

Questions 6 - 8 Interpretive Level

6. What is the attitude of the townspeople of Holcomb about the crime immediately after it is committed and as time progresses?

[The first reaction, of course, is complete, uncomprehending shock. The Clutters just aren't the kind of people to get themselves killed. Sheriff Roberts' statement that it is "apparently a case of a psychopathic killer" is the next natural reaction. Then, inevitably, there sets in a period of speculation and fingerpointing.

Mrs. Clare at the post office thinks it may have been the men in the airplane, the one Herb Clutter sued for crashing into his fruit trees. One old man at church says, "All we've got here are our friends . . . what a terrible thing when neighbors can't look at each other without kind of wondering." Of course, Bobby Rupp—probably the last to see them all alive on Saturday night—is their first principal suspect, although he is subsequently quickly cleared. Al Dewey, the ex-FBI man put on the case, leans toward a "grudge" killing aimed against one of the victims, and many townspeople agree with him. The consensus is the opinion of Arthur Clutter, Herb's brother, "When this is cleared up, I'll wager whoever did it was someone within ten miles of where we now stand."

One theorist goes so far as to speculate that Herb Clutter, "spread pretty thin," has "taken out a big insurance policy, shot Bonnie and the kids, and killed himself with a bomb." Predictably, a few sick cranks call in to confess. Some people just load up their families and move out of the country in fear.

The theory that the slayings are somehow tied in with someone who once worked for the Clutters turns out to be the valid one when ex-convict Floyd Wells finally tells his story to the authorities. Some townspeople attend the trial out of curiosity to see the "monsters," but others stay away because it is just not done. But as in more recent, more publicized cases of brutal assassinations, there will probably always survive an

IN COLD BLOOD

aura of frightened speculation.]

7. What is Floyd Wells's part in the crime and its solution? Why does he not step forward sooner?

[Floyd Wells, upon hearing a radio broadcast of the Clutter slayings, not only knows the family, but he also knows very well who has murdered them. Eleven years previously, he had worked for about a year on the River Valley Farm and left only because he was "feeling kind of footy." He always liked the whole Clutter family—"a real nice family." Around 1949, he had married, divorced, served in the army, "other stuff happened," and in 1959 he had been sent to Lansing for breaking into an appliance store. In Lansing, he had celled with Dick, due for early parole. Dick revealed rather grandiose plans for what he was going to do when he got out, mostly leading up to "hanging out a regular washline of hot paper." In an almost casual way, Floyd mentioned his job at the prosperous Clutter farm and the large amount of money obviously needed to operate it. Dick was immediately eager to find out how much money was kept in the house and where. Floyd "seems to remember" a cabinet, or safe, "or something" in Mr. Clutter's office. Dick said he would recruit his buddy Perry, go to the Clutter home, rob them, then tie up and kill the Clutters. Floyd never tried to persuade him not to do it, because he never really thought for a minute he would do it—"it's brag, mostly." Still, it does happen, just as Dick said it would. Floyd is afraid to tell his story because if he bears tales to the warden, his life "wouldn't be worth a dead coyote." However, no longer able to live with the guilty knowledge (Mr. Clutter had always been good to him—gave him a little purse with \$50 in it for Christmas), he arranges to get his story to the warden and gives the authorities the lead they need to apprehend the killers. Floyd testifies for the state at the trial, collects the \$1,000 reward offered by the Hutchinson News, and is paroled. "But his good fortune is short-lived. He is soon in trouble again . . . and at present is a resident of Mississippi State Prison in Parchman, Mississippi, where he is serving a 30-year sentence for armed robbery."]

8. What does Alvin Dewey's meeting with Sue Kidwell in the cemetery at the end of the book accomplish for him?

[It synthesizes the whole experience for him. He has been uneasy, even after the hangings, even though as an officer of the law he must uphold the state's right to execute the two killers. In this final scene, where Sue's presence makes Nancy's absence all the more vivid, the thought of Perry merges with that of Nancy—the sad undertones of their fate giving the story a poignant "resolution."]

Questions 9 and 10 - Critical Level

9. Does the Clutter family come through as almost "too good to be true," or are they believable characters? *[The Clutters are an intelligent, public-spirited family, who lead simple, unpretentious lives. If they remind the reader of "I'm as corny as Kansas in August/I'm as common as blueberry pie . . . a cliché coming true"—from South Pacific—they are, nonetheless, real and believable people. In some ways their life is an anachronism, but a genial one. Their murder is not just the horrifyingly brutal death of four individuals but the murder of a part of the America of legend, of songwriters, movie producers and advertising men. There is something almost compulsive about their good works. (Capote adopts an occasionally ironic tone about this in spite of himself.) Not only are their doors unlocked but also the windows of their private lives as well. Only Mrs. Clutter seems unable to stand the public gaze, and she is considered "sick" by her neighbors. Something about the entire public nature of the Clutters' lives is a bit disquieting. It becomes bizarre when Beverly marries, as planned, in the same church where five days earlier the mass funeral has been held for the four murdered members of the family.]*

10. Is Capote more interested in one of the criminals than in the other?

[Yes, in Perry. More space is devoted to an analysis of his motives and actions than those of Dick. Capote seems almost at times to dismiss Dick as a boy with a decent background who went sour. The author has a natural compassion for Perry's type. Except for the fact that Capote has no criminal tendencies, one feels they have a lot in common, both physically and emotionally (Capote is a quite short-legged man of something less than a pedestrian emotional makeup). From the beginning, Dick is cast as a foil for Perry—the "heavy" of the piece. Although Perry is thoroughly individualized in the book, he is also a clinically perfect type of misfit turned psychopath, psychopath turned killer. He is also a spooky embodiment of characters in Capote's earlier fiction. In fact, it is amazing that a real human being can accidentally have all the characteristics of Capote's typical fictional protagonists. Although Capote went to Holcomb simply to report whatever evolved, with no idea of what that might be, what may have started out to be the story of a town in the grip of a baffling crime, turns out to be an account of the attempt to understand the character of one man—Perry Smith.]

Question 11 - Creative Level

11. Support or refute the following statement: Capital punishment is legalized murder.

IN COLD BLOOD

COMPREHENSION TEST

Part I: True or False (30 points)

In the space provided write true if the statement is completely true or write false if any part of the statement is false.

- _____ 1. Everyone knew that Bonnie Clutter had been an on-and-off psychiatric patient the last half-dozen years.
- _____ 2. Herb Clutter was a joiner, a born leader — but Bonnie was not.
- _____ 3. Richard Hickock knew the lyrics of some two hundred religious hymns and ballads.
- _____ 4. One rumor originating in Hartman's Cafe involved Taylor Jones, a rancher whose property adjoins River Valley Farm.
- _____ 5. According to Lester McCoy, it was only a coincidence that prompted the move of his family to Colorado.
- _____ 6. The Clutter binoculars and radio were purchased from the killers by an unknowing Mexico City policeman.
- _____ 7. "A History of My Boy's Life" was written by Perry's mother in an effort to help her son obtain a parole from the Kansas State Penitentiary.
- _____ 8. "Impressions I Garnered From the Letter" was the title of Willie-Jay's analysis of Perry's mail from his sister.
- _____ 9. Mrs. Barbara Johnson, Perry's sister, stated that she was afraid of her brother and wanted to have nothing to do with him.
- _____ 10. Perry's first recorded arrest was on his eighth birthday.

Part II: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Complete each of the following statements with the best response. Indicate your choice by writing the letter of the appropriate response in the space provided.

- _____ 1. The only person ever to recognize Perry Smith's worth, his potentialities, as he saw himself — exceptional, rare, and artistic was (a) Dick Hickock (b) Tex John Smith (c) Willie-Jay (d) Arthur Fleming.
- _____ 2. Due to the unexpected tragedy and because of the many relatives being at River Valley Farm from distant places, Beverly Clutter and Vere English decided (a) to postpone their wedding date (b) to be married only days after the funeral (c) to hold an auction of the Clutter family possessions (d) to sell the land and house to whichever relative expressed interest.
- _____ 3. The one piece of property which Dick Hickock removed from the Clutter residence was (a) Kenyon's radio (b) Bonnie's purse (c) Nancy's watch (d) Herb's binoculars.
- _____ 4. The single clue found on the murder scene was (a) the fingerprint of Perry Smith's left thumb (b) a letter Perry dropped, addressed to him from his sister Barbara (c) footprints from a pair of boots with a Cat's Paw print on the sole (d) the shotgun shells left lying on the floor.
- _____ 5. The ultimate penalty in the State of Kansas was death on the gallows, referred to by the inmates in the prison as the (a) corner (b) wall (c) hut (d) neck-slicer.

IN COLD BLOOD

- _____ 6. When the angry crowd which had gathered at the Finney County courthouse caught sight of the slayers, the people (a) began to riot (b) ironically fell silent (c) literally threw stones (d) chanted hate slogans.
- _____ 7. As a child, as a youth, and as a man, Perry had dreamed of a rescuer in the form of (a) a man like Willie-Jay (b) a man with a cowboy hat like his father Tex (c) a yellow bird (d) an angel of light.
- _____ 8. The jury's deliberations lasted (a) forty minutes (b) four hours, ten minutes (c) two days (d) six days and five hours.
- _____ 9. After the jury announced its decision and as the condemned men were led away (a) Smith cried while Hickock was passive (b) Hickock shouted obscenities (c) both men laughed (d) Mrs. Hickock collapsed in her chair.
- _____ 10. The first murder suspect was (a) Bobby Rupp (b) Alfred Stocklein (c) Floyd Wells (d) Harrison Smith.

Part III: Matching (20 points)

Match each of the following descriptive phrases to the character to whom the phrase applies. In the space provided write the letter corresponding to the appropriate character.

- _____ 1. the sole resident employee of River Valley Farm — his family of five lived in a house not a hundred yards from the main house.
- _____ 2. one cardboard suitcase, a guitar, two boxes of books and maps and songs, poems and old letters were his only possessions
- _____ 3. as he drove by on his way to New Mexico, he broke into the Clutter house out of curiosity, and was caught with a shotgun and a knife in his car
- _____ 4. in the autumn of 1948, he arrived at River Valley Farm, and remained there working through the winter
- _____ 5. envy was constantly with him — the enemy was anyone who was someone he wanted to be or who had anything he wanted to have
- _____ 6. accepted the role of Hickock's attorney with a resigned grace, and simultaneously imperiled his own career
- _____ 7. first person to find the dead bodies — a good friend of the family
- _____ 8. what you might call a "book" lawyer — he never experimented, always ran a trial strictly by the text
- _____ 9. forty-seven year old fourth generation Kansan — former sheriff of Finney County — Garden City representative of the Kansas Bureau of Investigation
- _____ 10. Mr. Clutter's neighbor who had auctioned his farming equipment and moved to Nebraska

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| a. Perry Smith | g. Arthur Fleming |
| b. Dick Hickock | h. Roland Tate |
| c. Alfred Stocklein | i. Sue Kidwell |
| d. Alvin Dewey | j. Agent Duntz |
| e. Hideo Ashida | k. Floyd Wells |
| f. Johnathan Daniel Adrian | l. Harrison Smith |

Part IV: Essay (20 points)

Both Hickock and Smith hanged for the Clutter murders. Who actually did the killing? Is there any doubt? Explain.

IN COLD BLOOD

COMPREHENSION TEST ANSWERS

Part I: True and False (30 points)

1. true
2. true
3. false
4. true
5. false
6. true
7. false
8. true
9. true
10. true

Part II: Multiple Choice (30 points)

1. c
2. b
3. d
4. c
5. a
6. b
7. d
8. a
9. c
10. a

Part III: Matching (20 points)

1. c
2. a
3. f
4. k
5. b
6. l
7. i
8. h
9. d
10. e

Part IV: Essay

In the beginning Perry Smith orally confessed to agents Dewey and Duntz that Hickock had killed the two women. However, Hickock had given a signed confession in which he had attributed all four deaths to Smith. This was the only serious discrepancy between the two versions of what happened the night of the slaying.

Later, when Smith was asked to sign a statement, he insisted on changing his story — admitting that it was he, Perry Smith, who has shot and killed the whole family. According to what he said, Smith told Dewey that he decided to tell the absolute truth because he wanted to show what a coward Hickock was after all.

However, at another time Smith gave a different reason for wanting to change his story. He said he was admitting to all four murders out of consideration for Hickock's parents — said he was sorry for Dick's mother and it might be some comfort to her to know Dick never pulled the trigger.

Agent Dewey wasn't sure whether or not Smith's new confession was the truth, and so he didn't allow Smith to alter his original statement.

Finally, because the defendants declined to testify in their own behalf, the question of whether Hickock or Smith had been the actual executioner of the Clutter family never did arise. For this reason, the absolute truth went with the men to their graves.



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